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Press Release

August 8, 2019

Senator Rob Portman Named 2019 Great Lakes Legislator of the Year

TOLEDO, OH – Ohio Senator Rob Portman (R) has been named 2019 Great Lakes Legislator of the Year by the largest labor/management coalition representing shipping on America’s Fourth Sea Coast. The award is presented annually by Great Lakes Maritime Task Force (GLMTF) to a legislator who has helped advance waterborne commerce on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway and will be presented on August 9th at 1:30 p.m. at The Great Lakes Towing Company, 4500 Division Avenue, Cleveland, OH.

“Senator Portman understands the importance of marine transportation to our national and regional economies,” said John D. Baker, President of GLMTF in 2019. “As co-chair of the Great Lakes Congressional Task Force, Senator Portman often works in a bipartisan way on the complex issues confronting the region.”

Baker, President Emeritus of the International Longshoremens Association’s Great Lakes District Council, said, “GLMTF is especially grateful that Senator Portman played a key role in passing the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act as part of the Coast Guard Authorization Bill. While preserving a role for the states and the Environmental Protection Agency, it charged the Coast Guard with primary responsibility for implementing and enforcing vessel regulations. Senator Portman negotiated language that overwhelmingly passed the House and Senate.”

“Senator Portman’s commitment to workforce development and interest in U.S. shipbuilding are other reasons for his selection,” said Richard Hammer, 1st Vice President of GLMTF and Assistant General Manager of Donjon Shipbuilding and Repair. “Presenting the award at the Great Lakes Shipyard on the Cuyahoga River is an appropriate venue,” he continued.

John E. Clemons, 2nd Vice President of GLMTF and National Vice President Great Lakes for American Maritime Officers, stressed Senator Portman’s support for a strong U.S.-flag merchant marine played another role in his selection. “As a member of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, Senator Portman understands that the economic security, homeland security and national security interests of the United States are best served by vessels crewed, built and owned by Americans.”

Jim Weakley, 3rd Vice President of GLMTF and President of Lake Carriers' Association, stressed Senator Portman's support for the many jobs along the waterfront and the roles they play in the economy are unquestioned. "Senator Portman continues to work on environmental and economic issues that benefit Lake Erie and the entire Great Lakes region. His bipartisan nature is a true testament to Midwest values and Ohio's tradition of statesmanship."

"I'm honored to be named the 2019 Great Lakes Legislator of the Year by the Great Lakes Maritime Task Force," said Portman. "As co-chair of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force, I will continue to lead the fight to protect our Great Lakes while ensuring our shipping industry in Ohio and across the region remains competitive. Lake Erie is an Ohio treasure that provides drinking water for three million Ohioans, supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, and draws millions of visitors each year. I will continue to fight to help preserve this treasure for future generations."

With his selection as Great Lakes Legislator of the Year, Senator Portman becomes the eleventh Ohio legislator to receive the award since its inception in 1998. . Previous recipients are Sen. John D. Glenn (D); Rep. Louis B. Stokes (D); Rep. Steve LaTourette (R); Sen. Mike DeWine (R); Sen. George Voinovich (R); Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D); Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D); Rep. Betty Sutton (D); Rep. Bob Gibbs (R) and Rep. David Joyce (R).

Founded in 1992, Great Lakes Maritime Task Force promotes domestic and international shipping on the Great Lakes. With 78 members, it is the largest U.S. coalition to ever speak for the Great Lakes shipping community and draws its membership from both labor and management representing U.S.-flag vessel operators, shipboard and longshore unions, port authorities, cargo shippers, terminal operators, shipyards and other Great Lakes interests. Its goals include ensuring Lakes dredging is adequately funded, construction of a second Poe-sized lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, bolstering the Coast Guard's icebreaking resources, protecting the Jones Act and other U.S. maritime cabotage laws and regulations, maximizing the Lakes overseas trade via the St. Lawrence Seaway, opposing exports and/or increased diversions of Great Lakes water, and expanding short sea shipping on the Lakes.

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